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Research and Reference Service

OVERSEAS REACTION TO THE CUBAN SITUATION
(As of 8 a. m.)

R-122-62 (A)

October 25, 1962

This is a research report, not a statement of Agency policy

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SUMMARY

While general support for the U.S. quarantine of Cuba continues, some of the Free World press and government comment indicates second thoughts and reservations.

Comment has not been received on the impact of Khrushchev's statement to Bertrand Russell or U Thant's moves in the United Nations.

The Cuba story still is of consuming interest in most of the press and is getting heavy news play even in India where that nation is in a conflict of its own.

Latin American governments are holding firm in their support, but signs of doubt appeared. These are based on fears of atomic war plus reservations about the use of force.

The government of Brazil, for example, supported the arms quarantine, but added: "Our representative on the OAS Council wished to make it clear that the Brazilian government does not lend its support to the use of force which may violate an independent country's territorial integrity...."

Mexican President Lopez Mateos said his nation would try through the inter-American system and UN to "relieve the tensions of the present crisis."

There were a few bombs in Latin America and anti-US demonstrations in several areas. Atomic war jitters were noted in Panama, Colombia and Bolivia.

In most nations, outside the Soviet Bloc, the reasons for the U.S. actions seem to be understood but are sometimes criticized as precipitous moves which might bring on general war. About the only independent nation going down the line for Cuba is Algeria.

LATIN AMERICA

Latin America continues to pledge its support to the decisions taken by the United States as endorsed at the OAS, but some qualifications and reservations are appearing as the first shock wears off.

These appear most strongly in Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Uruguay, where the traditional Latin fear of "Yankee" interference in the domestic affairs of a Latin American nation have begun to show through the veneer of hemispheric solidarity against the Soviet threat. A scattering of anti-U.S. violence in Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay testifies to the activities of certain leftist oppositionist sectors in these countries.

Argentina provides the most solid support of U.S. actions, with the press currently giving endorsement to the official Argentine position. The latest La Prensa editorial assails the "Russian cold-blooded intent on domination." The Buenos Aires Herald points with pride to the "spontaneous" hemispheric solidarity in the crisis.

The ultra-conservative El Comercio of Lima, Peru, adds the note that the U.S. blockade is "not interference in Cuba's internal affairs, but a precautionary measure for hemispheric security." APRA leader Adres Townsend also defends the legality of the U.S. actions, calling for support to avoid the U.S. having to stand alone in this crisis raised by Communist intrusion.

Ecuador too, both officially and through political leaders, has supported the U.S. stand and assailed the expansion of the Soviet Union into the hemisphere.

But official stands in Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay demonstrate concern over the possibility of armed interference in Cuba's internal affairs. A vote of censure of U.S. actions in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies was defeated by a fairly thin margin. A beginning of appreciation of the war threat also has shown itself in the various nations of Latin America. There is a strong undercurrent of stress on peaceful solutions to the crisis and a number of papers have responded to the President's warning that most Latin countries also fall under the shadow of Soviet rockets in Cuba. The Panamanian government has officially counseled against hysteria and pessimism

and has invited U.S. Canal Zone officials to participate in a civil defense conference.

For the most part, the smaller nations of Latin America show solidarity with the United States and continue to pledge actual support either of armed forces or bases.

CUBA

Havana radio and Prensa Latina are reporting the same general vein. Castro's Tuesday night statement was praised as a "complete answer to aggressive and adventurous measures taken by the U.S. government, "

Prensa Latina carried a quotation from Francisco Juliao, president of the Brazilian Peasant Leagues. He said, "Kennedy must not come to Brazil. He must not come to the northeast... to Recife, the City of Freedom, to face our people with his Pharisaical smile, so that he can continue to plunder the wealth of our country. "

Without comment, Prensa Latina carried to Latin America excerpts from Khrushchev's message to Bertrand Russell. The Radio Moscow news broadcast beamed to Cuba led with the Khrushchev-Russell exchange.

WESTERN EUROPE

Only spotty editorial comment is available after the initial heavy outpouring of press discussion of the Cuban crisis yesterday. It ranges from Spain's unequivocal support to Italy's increasingly concerned attitude. British press opinion seems divided between understanding of the reasons behind the U.S. actions and disapproval of the extent of the actions themselves.

Lord Beaverbrook's Daily Express carries unreserved support for the American cause, and points particularly to the "dramatic" photographic evidence of the Soviet menace on Cuba. Both the Daily Mail and the Birmingham Post defend the U.S. right to retaliate against threats of this nature. But the Daily Mirror questions the wisdom of the President's action and the Daily Herald compares the crisis to Eden's "blunder" on Suez in 1956. These items appeared Wednesday.

In Italy, banner headlines express growing concern and alarm. Press interpretation of Premier Fanfani's speech varies with the political leaning of the paper, but most suggest it was less than a ringing endorsement of the U.S. action, particularly with regard to the blockade. The Socialist press is disapproving of the "drastic" U.S. steps and cautions against Italian involvement. PSI leader Nenni challenged the U.S. contention that Cuba could be a threat to the United States, while the party organ Avanti declared that "the Italian people cannot be involved in military actions they did not help to create." Unita, the Communist organ, played its expected theme of opposition and reported several Italian anti-U.S. demonstrations.

There is no French editorial reaction as yet to the rather cool communique released yesterday by the cabinet.

SOVIET BLOC

Soviet propaganda is increasingly inclined to challenge the specifics of the U.S. position. At the same time it continues to reassure its own people and the world at large that Moscow is not only strong but also careful.

For the first time, Soviet media directly reject our contention that the USSR has sent offensive weapons to Cuba. On the other hand, one spokesman said that "as for the type of weapons, every country decides for itself what weapons it needs for defense."

Also for the first time in the current crisis, the Soviet Union reiterates earlier contentions that it is perfectly capable of launching retaliatory blows at any part of the world from its own territory. This was pointed up by Defense Minister Malinovsky in a saber-rattling speech to military men.

The purported reasonableness of the Soviet Union was most significantly mirrored in Khrushchev's reply to Bertrand Russell. Lesser Soviet comment maintains that line in an apparent effort to convince all audiences that a strong Soviet Union can afford to be prudent within limits stake out by the requirements of survival. The obverse side of this argument, part of much of current Soviet output on the Cuban crisis, pictures an aggressive U.S. afraid of the new mood in the world and even ready to bring the world to the brink of war in order to preserve the old order.

Poland and Rumania have now published official statements generally attuned to the Soviet line. Albania, echoing China's slighting of the Soviet role, comes out in defense of little Cuba too small to attack the U.S., while condemning the latter for its policy of ringing the "Socialist" world with aggressive bases.

FAR EAST

Official statements approving the American course of action on Cuba were released by the government of Japan and by Thailand's Premier Sarit, but editorial comment began to flag in the face of slower moving developments.

Available comment tended again to reflect a somewhat ambivalent reaction featuring reluctant support for the American stand together with considerable concern over the forcefulness of the President's commitment and the war threat. Although support continued for U.N. action, Japanese papers began to note the futility of Security Council action in the face of an obvious Soviet veto.

Thailand's first editorial on the Cuban crisis followed closely on the heels of Prime Minister Sarit's press conference on October 24 enunciating Thai support. Sarn Seri termed the U.S. decision an "absolute necessity", and at the same time called upon the Soviet Union to turn back its ships lest "disaster" result for all peoples.

An official Japanese statement places the blame for the crisis on the Soviet warlike bases in Cuba which have upset the necessary "international equilibrium"; the statement receives coverage in all Japanese papers. The only new editorial appears in Yomiuri which examines possible U.N. action and recommends that Japan avoid too close identification with the U.S. and instead work closely with the neutrals. The paper predicts a statement in the Security Council. A columnist in Sankei also draws the conclusion that the U.N. is "half-paralyzed...because of Soviet abuse of the veto power." A columnist in Asahi repeats the theme of understanding for the reasons behind U.S. actions, but deplores the degree of the U.S. actions, terming them "too violent" and "not adult."

The Malayan press has refrained from further editorial denunciation of the President's action, but continues to feature scare headlines.

Communist China follows yesterday's official People's Daily editorial with a government statement approving the October 23 release by the Soviet Government and pledging Chinese support for

a "resolute struggle against this war provocation of U.S. imperialism." The Peking statement is relatively mild, however, and its major conclusion seems to be that no matter what the United States may do, "the Cuban revolution, which has struck root and grown on the soil of Latin America, can never be blockaded or strangled." Peking also reports the debates going on in the Security Council.

AFRICA

With only Ethiopia reporting in, private reaction sampled from conversations makes up for a lack of press, radio or official comment. Some reflections of past Soviet rocket threats can be observed in the reactions available to the USIS Post. There also were echoes of the argument that the U.S. has for a long time ringed the USSR with missile bases, and there was criticism of the quarantine. Some comment reflected a feeling that the U.S. might have waited too long. Among university students and faculty there seems to be little sympathy for U.S. action.